

money on their side to protect their retirees. Containing costs on the Medicare side clearly has the potential to keep costs down for employers insuring their retirees.

So now, as the Senate begins to schedule for early next year and Senators look at the variety of issues that are coming up, I hope they will look in particular at this concept which has won the support of 93 percent of the American people. I think most Americans just scratch their heads and say: How in the world could the Government say the only people in the United States—the only people in the United States—who will not bargain to hold down the costs of medicine are those running Medicare?

If you are in North Carolina and you are in the technology sector or you are in Oregon in the natural resources sector, the first thing you try to do is use your bargaining power and get the most for your dollar. You act as a smart shopper. And people have been flabbergasted that Medicare is the only “person” out there shopping without using every bit of clout that would be available to older people in the marketplace.

That is why this evening I wanted to take a few minutes to outline specifically how the changes Senator SNOWE and I have been advocating for the last few years would work. They are common sense. They use the marketplace to protect the wallets of senior citizens and our taxpayers. I am particularly pleased Senator REID has indicated this would be a high priority. Fifty-four Members of the U.S. Senate have already voted for it. I hope next year—as people begin to understand, with the examples I have given tonight and others, how this would work—my hope is early next year a significant step will be taken finally to hold down the costs of the medicines that are essential for this country’s older population.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURR). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EDWARD MCGAFFIGAN, JR.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission was established on January 19, 1975, to regulate the Nation’s civilian nuclear power industry. Since then, 25 men and three women have served as members of that commission. Members are appointed by the President by and with the advice and consent of the Senate for 5-year terms. On November 3, Commissioner Ed McGaffigan, Jr. became the longest serving member of the NRC. Of the 28 men and women who have served as commissioners since

1975, only 6 have been reappointed to a second term. Only one, Ed McGaffigan, has been reappointed to a third term. First appointed by President Clinton in 1996, Ed was reappointed to a second term in 2000, and reappointed by President Bush to a third term in 2005.

The Senate rarely confirms NRC nominations before the date set by law for the term to begin, so none of the six commissioners who have served 2-year terms have served a full 10 years. Until this month, the longest serving NRC commissioner was Kenneth Rogers, who served a week short of 9 years and 11 months. On November 3 of this year, Ed McGaffigan broke that record.

Length of time in office, of course, is not an end in itself. How long a commissioner serves is not as important as how well he or she serves the public interest while on the commission. By this measure, too, Ed McGaffigan stands out.

Congress created the Nuclear Regulatory Commission not to promote nuclear power but to regulate nuclear power. The commission’s job, in the words of the Atomic Energy Act, is to “promote the common defense and security and to protect the health and safety of the public.” Ed has taken those words to heart.

Throughout his time on the commission, Ed has worked to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the NRC’s regulatory programs. He has been instrumental in improving the reactor oversight process, focusing it more directly on risks and on activities important to plant safety and, at the same time, making it more transparent and open to the public. Following 9/11, he helped revamp the NRC’s security and emergency preparedness programs to strengthen the Nation’s nuclear facilities against the possibility of a terrorist attack. He has helped lay the groundwork for licensing the next generation of nuclear powerplants, new uranium enrichment plants, and the nuclear waste depository. He has also taken an active role in managing the generation change confronting the NRC by helping to hire and train a new generation of nuclear regulators to replace the current generation which is now retiring. He is a firm but fair regulator and an effective nuclear safety watchdog.

I take special interest in Ed’s achievements on the commission because Ed was one of the first people I hired when I came to the Senate in 1983. He was a legislative assistant. Later he was my legislative director and, finally, my senior policy adviser. He was my right hand on defense and technology policy, on personnel and acquisition reform, on nuclear non-proliferation and export control policy, all of that until he joined the NRC in 1996.

Ed had already established himself as a brilliant physicist and a dedicated public servant before I hired him. He had earned degrees in physics from both Harvard and Cal Tech and in pub-

lic policy from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. He had served in the Foreign Service. He had been a science attache at our embassy in Moscow. He held simultaneous senior posts on both the staff of the National Security Council and the Office of Science and Technology Policy. He was, in short, an established expert on science and technology and energy and defense issues when he joined my staff. As a newly elected Senator, I was indeed fortunate to have his counsel at the start of my work here in the Senate. He is an invaluable ally, a tenacious adversary, and a fine human being. I am honored to have his friendship.

It comes as no surprise to me that Ed has served the commission as long or as ably as he has. He has devoted his career to public service. He has served us well with his scientific skill, his expert knowledge, and his sound judgment.

At his third confirmation hearing before the Committee on Environment and Public Works last year, Ed spoke movingly of his Irish immigrant father. He had encouraged Ed to “dream big dreams” and taught him, by acting on those dreams, to make them possible. In a lifetime of public service, Ed has dreamed big dreams and the Nation is better for it.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SERVING FLORIDIANS

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, it is a great privilege for this Senator from Florida to continue public service as a result of the will expressed in last Tuesday’s election by the people of my State of Florida. It is a great privilege for a lifetime of public service. It is especially a great privilege serving in this body at this time in our Nation’s history, with the challenges that are facing us.

I believe there are many messages that have come from the American people in this election that we have just experienced. Clearly, the issue of Iraq and the policy of the United States Government toward Iraq is one. That was discussed during the election all over this country, and it was particularly discussed as two of the main items of interest in the two televised debates that we had in the Senate election in Florida.

The other message coming out of this election, in addition to Iraq, is that the American people are tired of the partisan bickering. They have seen excessive partisanship operative in Washington. When they see that excessive partisanship overlaid with ideological

rigidity, the result is gridlock. That is what we have had, in large part. People would like for their public servants to perform by reaching out to each other across the aisle and bringing people together in order to build that consensus in order to govern. That has not been the main theme in the American Government in the last several years.

I hope that both the House of Representatives and the Senate are getting that message loudly and clearly from the American people. I can tell you, Mr. President, I know what Floridians are thinking. It is my business to know that. Interestingly, also, Florida is a microcosm of the Nation. People are tired of this bickering. Folks do not want a Republican or a Democratic solution; they want the right solution. If you do what is right, you can get a lot done. That is what the American people want.

Certainly, a thorny problem, such as how to bring about stability in Iraq, is going to require a bipartisan solution. It is going to take a great deal of cooperation between the legislative branch, the Congress, and the executive branch, the President. The statements that we have heard by the new majority leaders of both the House and the Senate, as well as the statements made by the President, are certainly statements in the right direction. Now we will see if those statements can, in fact, become a reality in deeds and accomplishments.

This Senator is dedicated to reaching out and building that consensus across the aisle, when you look at the enormous challenges that are facing this country in addition to Iraq—the whole war on terror, the defense of the homeland, the protection of our seaports; the stability of the U.S. budget, the attempt to bring the budget back into balance, an approach of pay-as-you-go; attending to the needs of our senior citizens, particularly senior citizens who have been lifted out of so much poverty as a result of these programs, such as Medicare and Social Security, and the protection of those programs and the proper financing of those programs; the need of the United States to address the needs of assisting State and local governments on education; the preparation for the big one that is surely to come in terms of natural disasters because, surely, we are going to have it—and the two Senators in the Chamber, both, are coastal Senators. A category 4 or 5 hit directly from the water on a highly dense urbanized area, and that will cause economic havoc that will be even over and above what we have seen, and the potential of insurance losses in excess of what we experienced in the 2005 and 2004 hurricanes that hit a lot of our Southeastern States.

When the economic loss and insurance loss hits \$50 billion, there is no one State, no one insurance company that can withstand that kind of loss. That is another challenge facing us. Then there is the straightening up of

FEMA and its ability to respond, and respond quickly, which I have great hopes under Administrator of FEMA Paulison that we are much better prepared than we were in the 2004 and 2005 hurricane cycles.

As we go down the list of the challenges that are facing this country—and there are many that I have not named—these cannot be solved as a Democratic or as a Republican solution; they have to be solved with the right solution; otherwise, you will never get consensus, particularly in the Senate. So this is my profound hope, and I want to express it to the Senate on this first day after the Tuesday election of November 7.

The message has been clear: Stop the partisan bickering. Reach out across the aisle. Bring people together with the enormous geographical and philosophical differences as are expressed in this Senate, reflecting the opinions of the people of the United States to reach out across these partisan lines and bring people together.

Mr. President, again, I appreciate the privilege of continuing my service to our country as I express this heartfelt opinion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CORNYN). The Senator from Georgia.

TRIBUTE TO DR. ROBERT LIPSON

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, simultaneous with my remarks tonight at Kennesaw University Convocation Center in Cobb County, GA, there is a memorial service where thousands of my fellow citizens are paying tribute to the life, the times, and the contributions of Dr. Robert Lipson. On Saturday night, Dr. Lipson, leaving Kennestone Hospital, was killed in a tragic automobile accident with a motorcycle just two or three blocks from the health care facility to which he had dedicated the majority of his life.

Dr. Lipson was just not any ordinary doctor; he was an extraordinary human being. Dr. Lipson was president and CEO of WellStar Health Systems, the owner and operator of five hospitals in metropolitan Atlanta, in Cobb, Douglas, and Paulding Counties, the employer of hundreds of doctors and thousands of caregivers, and one of the true leaders in modern health care today in our State.

Dr. Lipson, in his time at Kennestone Hospital, did a \$68 million capital improvement with an 84-bed residential tower. He brought an open-heart surgical unit to Kennestone Hospital, and at the time of his tragic loss, Dr. Lipson's emergency room at Kennestone Hospital was the second largest emergency room in the State of Georgia and one of the largest in the United States, serving victims of tragic trauma throughout the metropolitan area.

But it wasn't only his leadership as the head of WellStar Health Systems. For 25 years prior to his appointment, he had a practice in internal medicine

in our community. He was a leader in his synagogue, Etz Chaim, and brought to that leadership tremendous involvement in our community. He was a gifted photographer. In fact, only 8 weeks ago—8 weeks before his death—his photography was displayed at Kennesaw University for all to see because of his great insight, his great talent, his credibility, and the way he had captured not only our community but all the special places in the world he visited.

So tonight on the floor of the Senate, on behalf of myself and thousands and thousands of citizens in my State, I extend to his wife, his mother, his son, and his daughter our sympathy in this tragic loss but also our pride and joy in the great contributions of Dr. Robert Lipson to the betterment of the health of countless thousands of citizens and the betterment and the health of our community.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL LANCE M. THOMPSON

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart and deep sense of gratitude to honor the life of a brave young man from Upland, IN. Cpl Lance M. Thompson, 21 years old, died on November 15th. Lance was killed by an improvised explosive device while conducting combat operations in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq. With his entire life before him, Lance risked everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

A 2001 graduate of Eastbrook High School, Lance followed in his brother Phillip's footsteps by joining the Marines. His father, Gregory, told the Kokomo Tribune that his son had been a committed member of the Armed Forces and believed in what the Marines were doing in Iraq. Reflecting on Lance's life, his half-brother, Matt, told the Marion Chronicle-Tribune that his "motto" had been "gung-ho." This selfless dedication carried Lance through his first tour of duty in Iraq and led him back again for a second tour, which began in September of this year.

Lance was the 38th Hoosier soldier to be killed while serving his country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was assigned to the Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine, 1st Marine Division, Camp Pendleton, CA. This brave young soldier leaves behind his wife Dawn, his father Gregory, his mother Melanie, his brother, Phillip; and his half-brothers, Matt and Alexander.